A SHORT

ACCOUNT

OF

MR. JOHN DILLON,

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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ONE-PENNY.

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BY Mr. Johnſon's advice, I will endeavour to leave ſome little account of myſelf behind me. But I muſt be very brief: my weakneſs being ſuch, that I cannot ſay much at once.

I was born in the army, and received his Majeſty's pay at about fourteen years of age, belonging to General Montague's regiment. In the year 1746 I was called abroad, and was in the battle of Dettingen, in the midſt of the French Gens d'arms and Gard a corp, which were cutting down our men on every ſide. Yet not an hair of my head was hurt: but I was nothing affected either by the danger or the deliverance.

At the battle of Fountenoy, thouſands fell on my right and my left. I was taken priſoner, but had not one wound. This did affect me deeply, and I ſolemnly reſolved, to lead a new life. But it was in my own ſtrength, ſo that after a few weeks I was the ſame man as before.

Another danger I was in, from which, humanly ſpeaking, it was ſcarce poſſible to eſcape. We were fourteen regiments of *Engliſh*, *Hanoverian*, and *Dutch*, who were left near Maeſtrich, to cover the retreat of our grand army. The next morning, about nine o'clock, we ſaw the French grand army near us, who advanced in good order. We had thrown up a little breaſt work in our front the night before. From this we kept up a conſtant fire, with grape ſhot from our can-

non, and ſmall ſhot from our muſketry: numbers of them were killed, but they continually ſupplied their places with freſh men, till coming up to our breaſt-works, they poured their fire all upon us at once. We were then obliged to make the beſt of our way, to a plain, where we expected to find our grand army. But they had marched the night before, near twelve miles, and had paſſed the river Mayne. Yet a few of us were enabled to overtake them; though when we came out of the field, the ſtrongeſt company in our regiment could muſter only eleven out of ſeventy men. Yet I continued in open rebellion againſt God, till the war broke out again.

It was on March 27, 1744, that I married at Preſton in Lancaſhire. Some years after General Montague, Lieutenant Colonel before, being preferred to a regiment, made me his Drum Major, but told me, unleſs I left off cards, he would ſend me about my buſineſs. I did leave them off; but in other things was as bad as ever, till we were ordered for Ireland, and ſtationd at Cork. But I was not eaſy. Fearful thoughts followed me. I often wiſhed, that there was no God, or that I had no ſoul. Yet I went on in ſin: although frequently in the midſt of my drinking and ſinging obſcene ſongs, I have been ſuddenly ſtruck; my countenance changed, and I could not open my mouth. I then made freſh reſolutions; but when freſh temptations came they vaniſhed away. So I continued in ſin, tho' as weary of ſin as the Iſraelites of their Egyptian bondage. I was in this ſtate, when I had two fits of ſickneſs, in each of which I vehemently promiſed amendment; but almoſt as ſoon as they were over, I returned as a dog to the vomit.

During my recovery from a third fit of ſickneſs, the Holy Spirit began to work powerfully in me, bringing all my ſins to my remembrance, which had been from my very childhood. Now the conſtant cry of my heart was, "What muſt I do to be ſaved?" And as ſoon as I got better, I went to church every day: but whenever the commandments were read in the communion ſervice, I was cut to the heart, and at the end of each, my cry was, "Guilty, O God! I am the man! But have mercy upon me, and I will never do ſo any more."

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I continued thus for above eight or ten days: when on Friday, Oct. 11. 1757, in the afternoon the Curate read (the second lesson) the xvth of St. Luke. From the beginning of the chapter I found that cloud which was on my soul begin to give way. At the 10th verse my despair almost past away, and the tears began to flow from my eyes. Yet I was not satisfied: I thought something was wanting, but could not tell what it was. I felt a straitness on my heart: but at the beginning of the parable of the prodigal, I was all attention. I do not remember, that one thought wandered from the narrative while it was reading: I found myself the very man. With my whole heart I joined in that, *I will arise and go unto my Father.* My heart now began to soften much more; and from the 19th to the end of the 23d verse, I found all within me just like wax melting before the fire. And when those words were read, "This my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found, my soul was fully set at liberty, from all guilt and condemnation for past sins. My heart rejoiced in God my Saviour, and my mouth broke out in holy praise. I came home rejoicing to my wife, and told her, I believed some good thing had happened to me. I could then express myself in no better manner; for I did not understand what justification meant.

I had not continued in this joy many days when Satan came upon me like a flood, charged afresh with all my sins, and told me, there was no possibility of my being saved. This sunk me very low. I went to the Curate and told him of all my trouble. He bid me, "Not to be afraid, for all would be well." I went away pretty well contented. But I had not been long at home before Satan began to tempt me in another way. He suggested, That the Bible was but a cunning devised Fable; that there was no Christ, yea, no God. The temptation was the heavier, because I had no man to open my mind to. But the Lord was with me in my temptation, and gave me the consolation of his Spirit; which though not continuing long at a time, yet greatly refreshed my soul.

After some time, a maid servant of our Colonel, observing a change in my life and conversation, came to my room, and after a little discourse asked me, "If I would go with her and hear the Methodists?" I told

her what a bleſſing I had found at church, and ſaid, I did not care to go any where elſe. But ſome days after another woman importuning me much, I promiſed, I would go once. I went with her to hear Mr. Trembath, and was wonderfully pleaſed, to hear him preach without book. Yet it was ſome time before I went to hear again. In the mean time I was overcome by one of my beſetting ſins, anger. For a mere trifle, I ſpoke haſtily to my wife, and continued for ſome time in a violent paſſion. My peace was gone: the viſitations of the Holy One were withdrawn, and my ſoul covered with darkneſs and horror. What to do, I could not tell: I would have done any thing, to regain what I had loſt. When I was adviſed to go and hear the Methodiſts again. I readily went, and hearing the preacher ſay "All manner of ſins, ſhall be forgiven unto man; only let him come to Chriſt: my hope ſo ſweetly revived, that I had no more occaſion to be aſked, to hear the Methodiſts. I now longed for every opportunity of hearing. And the people, ſeeing a ſtranger attend ſo cloſe, came to me after preaching, firſt one than another, talking of the things of God, encouraging me to go on, and always pointing me to Chriſt. After a time, I wanted to ſee the manner of their meeting together in a claſs. I met in one, and ſoon after joined the Society.

In a few days the Lord viſited my ſoul and reſtored the light of his countenance. I walked comfortably again, praiſing and adoring God. But it was not long, before I was grievouſly attacked by the enemy, concerning the divinity of Chriſt; and the more I reaſoned with him, the more I was perplexed. At length I ſaw, it was enough for me, to reſt in that general declaration, "There are three that bear record in heaven: and theſe three are one." I was then delivered from the force of the temptation, which never after returned with the ſame violence.

By the time I had heard the preaching about a year, I was clearly convinced, that although juſtification was an invaluable bleſſing, yet without ſanctification, without the mind which was in Chriſt, I was not meet for heaven. Indeed there is not the leaſt doubt, but every child of God, who endures unto the end, ſhall be put into poſſeſſion of this; ſeeing he hath promiſed

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who cannot lie. But how long or how ſhort a time before death, this was to be expected, I could not tell. I had heard that many in London had obtained this, and many more were expecting it continually. I conſidered, it was not of or by works, but the free gift of God: that the heart is purified by faith, and that all things, in Chriſt, are now ready. I was convinced, that God may do as he pleaſes with his own, if he could give it at the article of death, ſo he might give it 10, 20, or 30 minutes, or 35 many years before death. I found a ſtrong deſire to be a partaker of it, and began to pray for it with my whole heart. But it was ſuggeſted, "You have not been juſtified long enough yet, to expect ſo great a bleſſing;" and, "Such an unworthy, unfaithful wretch as you, cannot expect ſuch a favour from God." And hereby I was prevailed upon to give up my earneſt purſuit of it. At other times, when I have been juſt graſping the bleſſing, I have been turned back by another ſuggeſtion, "Not now: You cannot receive it now: You are not earneſt enough." But I have always remarked, That when I gave up the earneſt expecting it now, my ſoul grew barren and lifeleſs.

I continued thus for near two years, when Mr. Weſley came to Limerick, where the regiment I was in then lay, juſt before the ground for the Preaching-houſe was taken. Under his firſt ſermon, on; *Now is the day of ſalvation*, I was ſtirred up more than ever. I ſaid, if I can only believe, I ſhall obtain the prize: but found, the utter impoſſibility of doing this of myſelf. However the ſtrong deſire continued in my heart, with earneſt prayer for it. Before Mr. Weſley left Limerick, he told the Society, if they could procure ground for building, while he was at Cork and ſend him word, he would come back, and ſpend four days with them. They ſent him word. When I heard Mr. Weſley was come (in June 1762) I went to ſee him directly. He told me of ſome in Cork, who had lately received the pure love of God. At that very inſtant my ſoul broke out in ſtrong deſire and prayer. In coming back to my room along the ſtreets, my ſoul was in conſtant prayer. But I found like a large mountain of unbelief ſtanding in my way. As I came over Thomond bridge, I gave over praying in words, and began to

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mourn and ſigh, when in an inſtant, I felt a change through my whole heart and ſoul, ſuch as my tongue cannot expreſs. My ſoul was filled with love, my mouth with praiſe, and as I went along, I could do nothing but look to heaven.

You may aſk, what difference is there between this ſtate, and that I experienced before, I will ſimply declare what I felt. 1. Though I walked comfortably with God for near two years before, yet I often doubted, and was ready to give up all as a deluſion. But I have never ſince had the leaſt ſhadow of doubt, but can every hour and every moment, behold the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. 2. In my former ſtate my affections were never quite free from one particular idol. It was dear to me as life itſelf, and I could not give it up. But my heart was now entirely free, nor had it the leaſt part of my affections. 3. Before I found anxious cares and diſtreſſing fears. Now they are all vaniſhed away. 4. After the firſt change, I ſtill felt pride, anger, and ſelf-will, more than I could well bear. Since the ſecond I have not felt the leaſt degree, of any of theſe evil tempers; although temptations to all have not been wanting; but they paſſed by as a dart. Not that my natural tempers were deſtroyed; only they were changed by the mighty power of God, and directed into their right channels, grace flowing through every faculty of my ſoul, and enabling me to offer up my body, ſoul, friends, all I am and all I have, as a ſacrifice to God, every moment, and that without the leaſt reſerve.

I likewiſe ſtill found myſelf liable to ten thouſand miſtakes: which though they had no occurrence of my will, yet were violations of that holy law, which demands perfect, uninterrupted obedience in every thought, word and action. Theſe therefore would ſhut us out from the glory of God, were it not for the atoning blood: ſo that ſtill, although through the power of the eternal Spirit, I am altogether thine, yet,

"Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death."

From this time, through the great bleſſing of God, I enjoyed health of ſoul and body, till in July 1767, I was

was appointed for the North of Ireland. That into which I went, was a new circuit, in which there were not yet things very convenient for the preachers. The beds were generally damp, the houſes wet and cold, not well ſecured from either rain or wind. And my labour was great. Hearing the people crying out on every ſide for preaching, I forgot myſelf and almoſt continually went beyond my ſtrength. Nevertheleſs, I held out pretty well till ſpring: but in April 1768, I was ſeized with the fever. The houſe I was in was on the ſide of a mountain, very bleak and cold. It was about ſix yards long and four broad. There were four beds in it: in three of which lay the huſband, wife, five ſmall children, with a man and maid ſervant. Here I lay ſix weeks all but a day. From this time I had not my former ſtrength; although the people were exceeding kind, and let me want nothing that was in their power. When I was a little recovered, my fellow labourers being ſtill ſick, I laboured to ſupply their lack of ſervice, thereby brought that weakneſs upon myſelf, which never was quite removed. But the Lord made my bed in all my ſickneſs. The cabin was a little Bethel to me. He kept my ſoul in perfect peace, and in a full aſſurance of dwelling in his houſe for ever.

The Auguſt 1768 following I was appointed for Cork. Here it pleaſed God to viſit me firſt with a fever: afterward with an inflammation of the lungs once and again, and then with a fiſtula. Here I met with good friends, who ſuffered me to want nothing which could be of any uſe. Mean time my ſoul was kept exceeding happy. I had no repining thought, nor any choice, but was willing to live or die, as He ſaw moſt for his glory. As ſoon as I was able to take a journey, on Sunday Sept. 3, I ſet out for Dublin, where I was ſtationed. I came thither, Thurſday 7. With much difficulty I continued in my labour, till a little after Chriſtmas: when ſome mercurial pills, which I was adviſed to take for the fiſtula, gave me the finiſhing ſtroke. But here I found Chriſtian friends in plenty. Had I been the Lord Lieutenant, there could not have been more care taken of me. May they all hear at laſt, "In as much as ye have done it unto the leaſt of theſe, ye have done it unto me."

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As to my own conduct, since I first, through mere
believed, which is about fourteen years, I am asham
and confounded in the sight of God, at his great lov
to me a poor sinner: at thy long suffering, O m
God and Saviour, bearing so long with me, at thy gre
love, as it were forcing thyself upon me, and after m
constantly-repeated short-comings, still shewing me th
precious blood that cleanseth me from all sin.

But it may be asked, "Are you not deceived in this?" I answer, God gives his children, not the spirit of th world, but his own Spirit, for this very end, that the may *know the things, which are freely given to them of God*. By this Spirit I am not deceived. As plainly as I ca feel the wind blow, I felt a work of grace in my heart drawing me nearer and nearer to God. I felt a dail dying to this vain world, and a daily overcoming th remains of sin, till God was pleased to remove it all a one stroke. At the same time the Spirit testified, tha these things were freely given of God to a poor sinner

O Lord, keep me from every appearance of boasting Of thee only will I boast, my Lord, my God and m all: I will speak of thy loving kindness, while I hav a voice. Only keep my heart filled with thy love, an open my mouth to shew thy praise. O that the few days I have on this side eternity, may be filled up wit holy praise and adoration, telling to all around, how good, how gracious, how kind, how long-suffering, how merciful, how full of compassion thou art; how willin to save all that will come to thee, yea, the very chie of sinners; otherwise I must have been lifting up m eyes in hell long ago. O Jesus, thou Saviour and love of man, hasten to destroy the darkness of unbelief, an spread the light of faith over all the earth, that al may love and adore thee!

It is now near three months, that I have had, wit little intermission, grievous pains of body. But my compassionate high priest has hitherto laid his everlast ing arms of love underneath me. He has bore me up under all without a murmuring thought, without the least shadow of discontent. I cannot yet believe, I have one pain too much. The Lord give me to think thi same to the end!

And now, O Lord God of love, look down in mercy upon me the meanest and weakest of all; by thy free grace saved thus far, and save me, most holy and gra

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cious God to the end. Forsake me not, O Lord, for a moment; for without thee I cannot stand; and whatever sufferings thou giveſt me, only increaſe thy love abundantly in my heart, and give me grace and patience

"To ſuffer all thy righteous will,
And to the end endure."

And now into thy hands, O Saviour of ſinners, I commit my body, ſoul and ſpirit! Be mercifully pleaſed to fulfil thy faithful promiſe to thy ſervant and handmaid, (who thou knoweſt, loveth thee, and has freely given me up to thee) and when thou calleſt me hence, be a huſband to the widow, and a father to our fatherleſs babes, keep them from the evils of the preſent world; and of thine infinite mercy, bring us to meet round thy throne, to praiſe thee world without end!

He grew weaker in February, March and April 1769. May 10, his wife would fain have ſet up with him; but he would not ſuffer it. About ſeven in the morning, May 11, he changed: but ſtill lay quite and compoſed, till about ten he moved his head a little, and without any ſtruggle or groan, fell aſleep.

FINIS.